

IN SEARCH OF LONG BANGA'S RHINO

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The expedition team feted with dinner of local food and dance and singing performances. — STEPHEN THEN/The Star

MIRI: Rare and endangered animals like rhinoceros and *temadu* (Bosjavanias species of buffalo) have been reportedly sighted in the jungles of Long Banga, in Miri.

An expedition team made up of scientists, researchers and nature lovers, has been formed to carry out a detailed ground survey to locate these rare animals.

The team will also carry out indepth analysis of not just the animals, but also the plants and trees and other wild vegetations.

The results of these studies will be used as the platform for the Sarawak Forestry Department to formulate a blueprint for long-term measures for conservation and protection of these rare species of flora and fauna, said Sarawak Forestry Department deputy director Jack Liam.

Members of the expedition team are already in Miri.

On Saturday night, they were feted to a dinner of local food, dance and singing performances.

Today, they will head into Long Banga on four-wheel vehicles. The journey across rugged terrains via timber roads, is expected to take some eight hours.

Liam said the department was glad to find 114 environmental scientists, ecosystem researchers and nature enthusiasts from local and abroad joining in this very important project that his department is undertaking.

Speaking at the welcoming dinner, he said that local natives in Long Banga had seen rare animals in the forests there.

“This expedition team will go to Long Banga to confirm the existence of the rhinoceros and temadu. The locals there had reportedly seen them roaming in the forests.

“The team will also collect and document the species of plants and trees there and collect data for scientific analysis.

“They will also study in detail the historical background of the natives there and establish their social origins.

“Their traditional practices and way of life will also be included in the anthropology survey.

“These data to be collected will be very important for our department to plan conservation measures for the area,” he said.

Among the scientists and researchers in the expedition are those from local universities like Universiti Malaysia Sarawak, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Universiti Sains Malaysia and the Sarawak Biodiversity Centre.

The foreign researchers are from Denmark, Australia, Sri Lanka and Brunei. They will be in the jungles of Long Banga for at least, the next 11 days.